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Geothermal Potential Assessment in the Virunga National Park, Rwanda.

GEOTHERM Programme – BGR, Hannover, Germany

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Low electrification rates and uncertainties in power supply often hamper economic growth in developing countries. Many of these countries are situated in regions with high volcanic activity and a considerable geothermal potential. Nevertheless, geothermal energy potential has been harnessed only to a limited extent. The main reason that the potential is not fully tapped is the high initial risk associated with investment in such projects. These obstacles can be reduced with specific know-how and technologies.

German technical cooperation has taken the initiative to support partner countries in geothermal energy use. The Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR) on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) started the technical cooperation programme GEOTHERM in 2003. The objective of GEOTHERM is to promote the use of geothermal energy in partner countries by kicking off development at promising sites and minimising the risk associated with the development of geothermal resources.

As an example, the project activities with the Rwandan government will be presented. Within the project period from November 2007 until December 2008 the completion of a pre-feasibility study is planned. The study area includes major parts of the Virunga National Park and has a size of approximately 850 km^2.

In February 2008, the first geochemical sampling campaign of gases, fluids and rocks

will be finished. A high-resolution structural analysis using aerial images around Karisimbi volcano (4507 m asl) will be completed at the same time.